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ABSTRACT

A comparison was made between Navy enlisted personnel who entered Hospital Corpsman class A schools (technical training programs directly from a Recruit Training Command (RTC students, totaling 3044) and from other Navy jobs (strikers, totaling 363). The strikers had completed significantly more years of schooling with fewer suspensions or expulsions, on the average, than the RTC students. Aptitude test scores, Comrey Personality Scale scores, and satisfaction with school assignment were essentially the same for strikers and RTC students. Psychosocial perceptions of strikers toward the paramedical training environment were found to be less favorable than those of RTC students, but these differences were attributed to the contrasting Navy experiences of these two groups prior to entering class A school. The strikers had a higher rate of school completion than RTC students (89% versus 76%), a higher final grade average (86.0 versus 85.1), and a higher rate of survival on-the-job one year after completion of training (97% versus 94%). Overall, strikers were found in the study to be a better source of students for paramedical training than the RTCs. The report contains three statistical tables and lists five references. (Author)

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Demographic Characteristics, Psychosocial Perceptions, and Performance of "Strikers" Accepted for Navy Paramedical Training[1]

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Abstract

A comparison was made between Navy enlisted personnel who entered Hospital Corpsman class "A" school training directly from a Recruit Training Command (RTC students; N = 3044) and from other Navy jobs (strikers; N = 363). The strikers had completed significantly more years of schooling with fewer suspensions or expulsions, on the average, than the RTC students. Aptitude test scores, Comrey Personality Scale scores, and satisfaction with school assignment were essentially the same for strikers and RTC students. Psychosocial perceptions of strikers toward the paramedical training environment were found to be less favorable than those of RTC students, but these differences were attributed to the contrasting Navy experiences of these two groups prior to entering class "A" school. The strikers had a higher rate of school completion than RTC students (89% versus 76%), a higher final grade average (86.0 versus 85.1), and a higher rate of survival on-the-job one year after completion of training (97% versus 94%). Overall, strikers were found in this study to be a better source of students for paramedical training than the RTCs.

Demographic Characteristics, Psychosocial Perceptions, and Performance of "Strikers" Accepted for Navy Paramedical Training

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One of the major inducements for enlistment in the U. S. Navy is the opportunity to receive technical training. At present, approximately 60% of the Navy's enlistees are assigned to technical training programs (class "A" schools) immediately after completion of recruit training. The remaining graduates of recruit training are assigned to general duty Navy jobs.

Enlistees assigned to general duty have an opportunity to receive training for technical specialities while working on the job. When openings for on-the-job training occur at a local command, the general duty enlistee can request a transfer to these new technical duties. If the supervisor who reviews the enlistee's request for transfer determines that the candidate is properly qualified for the position, the trainee is allowed to work at less technical aspects of the new job under close supervision. In some specialities, e.g., Hospital Corpsman, if the enlistee performs satisfactorily during this on-the-job training period, which usually lasts from four to six months, he or she can be recommended for formal technical training at a class "A" school. This process is generally referred to in the Navy as "striking" for a job.

The Navy Medical Department routinely accepts strikers for training in the health care specialities. During recent years, approximately 10 to 15 percent of the student input at Hospital Corpsman (HM) class "A" schools has been drawn from other Navy jobs. The remaining students have been drawn directly from Recruit Training Commands (RTCs). Although the practice of accepting strikers for formal technical training is a well established practice, very little is known about the characteristics and performance of strikers in comparison with RTC students.

This study was conducted to evaluate the similarities and differences between the strikers and RTC students who enter Navy paramedical training. More specifically, the questions asked in this study were: (1) Do the aptitude, background, and personality characteristics of strikers differ from those of RTC students? (2) Do expectations and perceptions of the paramedical training environment differ for strikers as compared with RTC students? (3) Do the training outcomes differ for strikers and RTC students? and (4) Do the rates of on-the-job effectiveness for strikers and RTC students differ?

Method

Sample

The subjects for this study included 3407 Navy enlisted men and women who entered the Naval Hospital Corps class "A" school at San Diego during the period beginning in February 1973 and ending in January 1974. Approximately 11% of these students were strikers drawn from other Navy jobs

(N = 363); the remaining students reported to class "A" school from a Recruit Training Command (N = 3044).

Descriptive Measures

Three questionnaires were employed in this research: a background information form (BI), the Comrey Personality Scales (CPS), and the Work Environment Scale (WES). Questions asked on the BI pertained to years of schooling completed prior to service entry, number of suspensions or expulsions from school, satisfaction with school assignment, and reenlistment intentions. The CPS (Comrey, 1970) contains 180 items which assess the self-report characteristics of an individual on eight personality dimensions and two types of test-taking behavior. The WES (Insel and Moos, 1974; Booth, Norton, Webster, and Berry, 1975) contains 138 items which assess student perceptions of the occupational training environment. Two forms of the WES were used in this research: an Expectations form which assessed what students expected the occupational environment to be like and an Actual form which assessed what students actually found the training environment to be like. The items included in each WES form were the same except for verb tense.

The BI, CPS, and Expectations form of the WES were administered to students at the beginning of class "A" school training. The Actual form of the WES was administered eight weeks later. In addition, the General Classification (GCT) and Arithmetic Reasoning (ARI) test scores were

obtained from school records.

Outcome Measures

School completion, final grade average, and survival for one year on the job were the outcome measures used in this study. Student disenrollment figures and unweighted final grade averages were obtained from school records. For those students who completed training, nonsurvival on the job was determined by scanning Bureau of Naval Personnel computer tapes to identify those individuals who had been discharged from the service for reasons of unsuitability, unfitness, misconduct, or courts-martial during the one-year post-training period. In addition, individuals discharged during this period without a recommendation for reenlistment, regardless of the reason for discharge, were also considered to be nonsurvivors.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The first question asked in this study was whether the aptitude, background, and personality characteristics of strikers differed from those of RTC students. The means, standard deviations, and t-tests of the difference between means are shown in Table 1 for each of these variables. These figures indicate that, on the average, the strikers had completed more years of schooling with fewer suspensions or expulsions from school than the RTC students. The strikers were also found to report less frequently than the RTC students, on the average, that they intended to reenlist in the Navy. The average level of satisfaction with school

assignment was found to be essentially the same for strikers and RTC students. The aptitude and personality characteristics of strikers and RTC students were also found to be essentially the same.

Psychosocial Perceptions

Expectations. The second question asked in this study was whether the expectations and actual perceptions of the occupational training environment differed for strikers as compared with RTC students. The scale means and standard deviations for the Expectations and Actual forms for the WES are shown with t-tests of the difference between means for strikers and RTC students in Table 2. These figures indicate that there were significant differences in the expectations of these two groups on six of the seven environmental dimensions assessed by the WES. The strikers expected that the school staff would make greater use of rules and regulations to control students than did the RTC students. Furthermore, the strikers expected less effort by the staff to communicate with and understand the needs of students than did the RTC students. With regard to other students in training, the strikers expected to experience less interpersonal involvement and less student involvement in the task of becoming Hospital Corpsmen than did the RTC students. Finally, the strikers expected the physical environment to be less comfortable than did the RTC students.

Actual perceptions. Differences were also found in the way strikers and RTC students perceived the occupational training environment, although they were not as dramatic as the differences in expectations for these two groups. As was found with expectations, the strikers perceived less effort

by the staff to communicate with and understand the needs of students than did the RTC students. Strikers perceived less interpersonal and task involvement among students, again consistent with their less optimistic expectations, than did the RTC students. In contrast to what they expected, the strikers perceived less use of rules and regulations to control students than did the RTC students.

Discrepancies. When the discrepancies between expectations and actual perceptions were compared for strikers and RTC students, significant differences were found on three of the seven environmental dimensions. These figures are shown in Table 3. The discrepancy between expectations and actual perceptions was greater for strikers than for RTC students when the use of rules and regulations in controlling students was considered. The discrepancies were less for strikers than for RTC students when student involvement in the training program and comfort of the physical environment were considered. These differences indicate that the strikers tended to experience fewer disappointments with the paramedical training environment, as defined by these discrepancies, than did the RTC students.

Outcomes

The final question asked in this study pertained to whether strikers differ from RTC students on outcome measures, both in training and on the job. It was found that the school completion rate was 89% for strikers compared with 76% for RTC students. This difference was highly significant ($t = 5.43$, $p < .001$). Of those students who graduated from training, the

final grade average was slightly, although significantly ($t = 2.18$, $p < .05$), higher for strikers than for RTC students. The final grade average for strikers was 86.0 compared with 85.1 for RTC students. Once on the job, the one year survival rate for strikers was slightly higher than for RTC students (97% versus 94%). This difference was also statistically significant ($t = 7.50$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of this study have indicated that the prospects of strikers as candidates for paramedical training are better than the prospects of students drawn from Recruit Training Commands. This finding suggests that greater reliance should be placed upon strikers as a source of student input at the HM class "A" schools.

A question raised by these results is why the strikers, who were found to be as qualified for paramedical training as the RTC students, had not been assigned to class "A" school training previously by a recruiter or RTC job classifier. One possibility is that all class "A" school quotas had been filled at the time of service entry. Another possibility is that many of these individuals requested general duties when they entered the Navy, and after working for a period of time, came to view Navy training as a means to develop relevant and necessary vocational skills. This possibility is consistent with the results of Hoehn, Wilson, and Richards (1972) and Johnston and Bachman (1972), who found that the vocational plans of young men and women entering the

military service are often vague and uncrystallized. For some of these individuals, the military represents an opportunity to think things through at the same time they are gaining exposure to a variety of alternative occupational choices. Whatever the reason for having missed the first opportunity for obtaining technical training, these individuals clearly took advantage of the second. These findings suggest that the prior working experiences of strikers have facilitated the development of vocational maturity and motivation to do the job which has helped them to perform successfully in school. These findings also raise some intriguing new questions about the value of having recruits work on the job for a period of time before undergoing occupational training.

The less favorable expectations and actual perceptions of the paramedical training environment that were reported by strikers, as compared with RTC students, can also be viewed as a product of the strikers previous working experiences in the Navy. RTC students report for class "A" school training from the highly structured environment of recruit training. In contrast, strikers are most likely to report to class "A" school training from a work environment where they have had the opportunity to observe interpersonal and organizational relationships which are more typical of Navy life. Consequently, drawing upon a broader environmental perspective than RTC students and previous experience with graduates of paramedical training, strikers are more likely than RTC students to be realistic in their appraisals of the class "A" school environment. This hypothesis is

supported by the finding in this study that discrepancies between what was expected and actually found in training, with one exception, were less for strikers than for RTC students.

A major focus of this study has been on the training performance and one-year survival of strikers compared with RTC students. However, better indices of on-the-job performance are needed. While survival is necessary to perform effectively as an HM, it is not sufficient. Measures are also needed which assess how well strikers and RTC students are performing in their daily work activities. New performance evaluation scales, designed to make these job specific assessments, are being developed and will be the subject of future studies. In addition, the rates of reenlistment for strikers and RTC students will also be compared. One argument against the greater use of strikers in the paramedical specialities has been that they have less obligated time to work on the job after completion of training. It may be that strikers, in reporting a lesser tendency to reenlist then RTC students, were making a more realistic assessment of their intentions than were the less experienced RTC students. If strikers were found to reenlist more frequently than RTC students, the gain in career personnel might offset this argument. The actual rates of reenlistment for these two groups will be considered as they become available.

Overall, then, strikers were found in this study to be better than students drawn directly from RTCs. Although the strikers were found to be more critical of the paramedical training environment than RTC students,

they also tended to experience fewer "disappointments" in what they actually experienced during the course of training. An improvement in training and on-the-job outcomes would be achieved by adopting an administrative policy of accepting all qualified strikers prior to filling school quotas with RTC students.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-tests of the Differences Between Strikers and RTC Students on the Aptitude, Background, and Personality Variables

Variables	Strikers Mean	Strikers S. D.	RTC Students Mean	RTC Students S. D.	t
Aptitude (GCT + ARI)	108.78	13.57	108.13	13.59	0.83
Background:					
Years schooling	12.31	1.21	12.11	1.18	3.00*
Suspensions/expulsions	0.28	0.59	0.37	0.68	2.45*
Satisfaction	2.07	0.92	2.08	0.86	0.22
Reenlistment intention	2.19	0.96	2.38	0.83	4.04*
Personality:					
Trust	49.35	9.33	49.03	8.86	0.69
Order	57.42	9.27	57.08	9.39	0.63
Conformity	58.54	8.08	58.84	8.14	0.64
Activity	53.22	8.87	52.34	9.41	1.66
Emotional Stability	51.75	9.21	51.36	9.23	0.76
Extraversion	52.99	11.21	52.30	11.19	1.10
Masculinity	50.73	10.51	50.22	9.98	0.91
Empathy	54.64	9.62	55.04	9.70	0.73
Validity	53.19	11.82	53.56	12.01	0.56
Response Bias	58.50	11.77	58.76	11.77	0.39

*p <.05

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-tests of the Differences Between Strikers and RTC Students on the Expectation and Actual WES Scales

Variables	Strikers Mean	Strikers S. D.	RTC Students Mean	RTC Students S. D.	t
Expectation form:					
Work Pressure	5.39	1.79	5.33	1.82	0.43
Innovation	3.69	2.49	4.17	2.63	2.65*
Physical Comfort	3.07	1.76	3.63	1.71	4.77*
Control	5.23	0.98	4.95	1.24	3.37*
Communication	5.58	2.25	6.24	1.91	4.93*
Peer Cohesion	4.06	1.65	4.58	1.43	5.16*
Task Involvement	4.96	1.96	6.07	1.62	9.68*
Actual form:					
Work Pressure	5.28	2.12	5.49	2.04	1.43
Innovation	2.17	2.02	2.41	2.28	1.51
Physical Comfort	2.36	1.74	2.56	1.72	1.68
Control	4.31	1.56	4.57	1.40	2.66*
Communication	3.90	2.36	4.33	2.39	2.61*
Peer Cohesion	3.60	1.78	4.06	1.61	4.15*
Task Involvement	3.82	2.04	4.53	2.21	4.68*

*$p < .05$

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-tests of the

Differences Between Strikers and RTC Students on the

Discrepancies Between Expectation and Actual WES Scale Scores

WES Scale	Strikers		RTC Students		
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	t
Work Pressure	0.10	2.24	-0.16	2.18	1.66
Innovation	1.53	2.31	1.76	2.31	1.30
Physical Comfort	0.71	2.00	1.07	1.92	2.73*
Control	0.93	1.66	0.38	1.58	4.96*
Communication	1.68	2.28	1.92	2.35	1.44
Peer Cohesion	0.46	1.73	0.51	1.69	0.45
Task Involvement	1.14	2.05	1.54	2.05	2.85*

*p <.05

Footnotes

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